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Pl@ntNote: a flexible software for the management and share of data on plants

Philippe Birnbaum, Jean-François Molino, Jérôme Perez, Frédéric Théveny

Abstract

A key issue for biodiversity, agronomy and ecological studies is the availability of large and reliable databases on plants. Today, internet tools provide several services that allow the aggregation of various kinds of data into large databases. However, the preliminary and fundamental work of collecting and synthesizing data still relies on individual scientists or amateurs—each often with distinct objectives, tools and methods—who manage their data by themselves, rather than through network databases.

The resulting multiplicity of database and data file formats impedes data standardization and exchange. Furthermore, large collective databases are usually made by aggregating duplicates of individual datasets, yet often lack reliability because any control of data quality is made in the original dataset, but not in the duplicate.

Pl@ntNote is a free, easy-access and powerful solution to these problems, allowing the individual management of potentially any kind of botanical data. Its core includes generic methods independent from data type, such as editing, viewing, exporting, sharing, mapping, and searching. The user freely designs a database structure according to his/her own requirements. In a second step, structures and/or data can be exchanged within a community of users.

The distinction between structure and methods makes Pl@ntNote particularly well suited to meet the needs of scientists from various disciplines. Indeed, this tool is now in current use for the management of herbarium specimens, pictures, plant descriptions, growth surveys, weeds surveys, field inventories, living collections, genetic resources as well as palaeobotanic records. It is available in a stable beta version.